

Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00 NSAE-00
EB-07 COME-00 DODE-00 /023 W
-----131325Z 029337 /53

R 130943Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7693
INFO: RUDKRB/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 1754
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 0115

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CVIS, CSCE, PFOR
SUBJECT: BUSVIS-EE VERSUS HELSINKI

REF: 76 STATE A-6011

1. EMBASSY BUDAPEST IS NONPLUSED BY SUDDEN IMPOSITION OF A MANDATORY FOUR-WORKING-DAY BUSVIS WAITING PERIOD (REFAIR). WE ESTIMATE CONSERVATIVELY THAT THE NEW REQUIREMENT, WHICH WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS WILL FREQUENTLY EXTEND INTO A SIX-CALENDAR-DAY WAIT, WILL AFFECT THE TRAVEL PLANS OF APPLICANTS IN AT LEAST 10 TO 15 PERCENT OF OUR NUMEROUS BUSVIS-EE CASES. (FYI: BUDAPEST ISSUED 315 BUSVIS VISAS IN 1976.)

2. THE OLD BUSVIS PROCEDURE, ITSELF HOTLY DEBATED BEFORE ITS INCEPTION TWO YEARS AGO, AT LEAST PERMITTED NAME CHECKS TO BE DONE ON A POST CHECK BASIS -- SO THAT BUSVIS VISA APPLICANTS IN A HURRY TO TRAVEL WERE NOT UNNECESSARILY IMPEDED. A PARTICULARLY ALARMING ASPECT OF MANDATORY
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FOUR-WORKING-DAY BUSVIS WAITING PERIOD IS THE ABSENCE OF ANY PROVISION FOR WAIVING OR MODIFYING IT FOR BUSVIS APPLICANTS WHO MUST TRAVEL URGENTLY. MANY OF THE PERSONS WHO WILL BE INCONVENIENCED BY THIS NEW REGULATION OCCUPY POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE, INCLUDING EVEN MEMBERSHIP ON HSWP CENTRAL COMMITTEE. INDEED, ONE OF

THE MOST RECOGNIZED MANIFESTATIONS OF STATUS, POWER, AND PRESTIGE IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES IS THE ABILITY TO TRAVEL ABROAD. A NEW WAITING PERIOD RESTRICTION ON SUCH A KEY GROUP IS NOT LIKELY TO ENHANCE OUR EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL, AND POLITICAL EVOLUTION IN HUNGARY IN DIRECTIONS FAVORABLE TO U.S. INTERESTS, OR FOR THAT MATTER ANYWHERE ELSE IN EASTERN EUROPE.

3. BUT THE MOST DISMAYING ASPECT OF A-6011 IS ITS APPARENT FAILURE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE EXISTENCE OF THE FINAL HELSINKI DOCUMENT, ESPECIALLY BASKETS TWO AND THREE. JUST WHEN WE AND OUR ALLIES ARE TRYING TO UTILIZE THE FINAL DOCUMENT TO PERSUADE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES TO LIBERALIZE THEIR OWN TRAVEL PRACTICES AND ACCESS POLICIES, THE U.S. COMES DOWN WITH ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS OF ITS OWN. MANY BUSVIS TRAVELERS ARE PEOPLE WHO COMBINE CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE AT POLITICAL LEVELS IN THEIR GOVERNMENTS WITH BONAFIDE TRAVEL INTEREST IN EXPANDING EAST-WEST ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES. SUCH PERCEPTIVE AND POWERFUL PEOPLE, AS THEY WAIT FOR THEIR VISAS, CAN ONLY WONDER ABOUT THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN USG STATEMENTS RE IMPLEMENTATION OF BASKET THREE OF THE HELSINKI FINAL DOCUMENT AND ACTUAL USG PRACTICE.

4. LIKE ALL OTHER EE POSTS, EMBASSY BUDAPEST IS NOT UNAWARE OF SECURITY IMPLICATIONS POSED BY TRAVEL OF CERTAIN TYPES OF VISITORS TO THE U.S. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT IF USG IS CONCERNED ABOUT INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE OR THE TECHNOLOGY FLOW, PROBLEM SHOULD BE MET AT ITS SOURCE

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IN THE U.S. RATHER THAN BY AN ADDITIONAL BLANKET VISA RESTRICTION WHICH TARNISHES THE IMAGE OF THE U.S. ABROAD AS THE LAND OF THE FREE AND DAMAGES OUR POSITION ON THE EVE OF THE BELGRADE CSCE MEETING. APPROPRIATE PROCEDURES AND CONTROLS SHOULD BE SET UP AT THE COMPANY LEVEL IF THERE IS CONCERN RE CREDENTIALS OF A BUSVIS TRAVELER. IF THERE IS A CASE TO BE MADE AGAINST A PARTICULAR TRAVELER BASED ON HIS PAST PERFORMANCE OR CAREFULLY EVALUATED INFORMATION, THERE IS NOTHING WE KNOW OF WHICH PREVENTS US FROM DENYING HIM A VISA. BUT IF WE DO THAT TOO OFTEN WE HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR RETALIATION AGAINST U.S. BUSINESSMEN AS WELL AS CAPRICIOUS AND UNEXPLAINED COUNTER-ACTION IN OTHER AREAS. BUT TO IMPOSE ADDITIONAL VISA COMPLICATIONS ON BUSINESS VISITORS AS A GROUP WE BELIEVE IS BOTH POLITICALLY MALADROIT AND EXTREMELY HARMFUL TO THE U.S. IMAGE IN THE DELICATE CSCE PRE-BELGRADE CLIMATE. BASKET THREE IS A LARGE CRUMB IN THE BED OF THE USSR AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA, TO CITE TWO EXAMPLES. WHY GRATUITOUSLY GIVE THESE REPRESSIVE COMMUNIST REGIMES

A HAMMER TO HIT US OVER THE HEAD WITH AT BELGRADE?

5. THIS IS OUR CASE. WE REALIZE, OF COURSE, THAT THERE
MAY WELL BE ASPECTS OF THIS PROBLEM OF WHICH WE ARE
UNAWARE. WE WOULD, THEREFORE, BE GRATEFUL IF THE
DEPARTMENT WERE TO MAKE US PRIVY TO THE CONSIDERATIONS
THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DECISION RELAYED TO US IN

76 STATE A-6011.

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Message Attributes

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